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| Experiencing the Assembly Line  Step-by-step Instructions |
| **1. Before class, review the intent of this activity.** This activity is designed to have students experience the monotony and repetition of work on the assembly line. By assuming the roles of assembly line workers to repetitiously re-create one part of a drawing of a man, students will be better able to understand how the specialization of labor and the move to assembly line production impacted workers around the turn of the century. (**Note:** In this activity you will play the role of a factory manager and push students to work hard and quickly. It is critical that you have a cooperative learning environment in your classroom and a strong rapport with your students because they may feel vulnerable, uncertain, or upset by your behavior. Allow ample time to debrief the activity.)  **2. Introduce the activity and have students draw a man.** At the beginning of class, tell students that they will participate in an activity to learn about working conditions around the turn of the century. Give each student a blank sheet of unlined paper and explain that students are individual craftspersons who create paper dolls. Tell students that they will have five minutes to draw a picture of a full, frontal view of a man. Explain that after they have completed their drawings, the class will choose the best two drawings to use in the next part of the activity. Tell students to create the best, most detailed drawings they can in the allotted time.  **3. Have students choose the best drawing and arrange the classroom.** Once students have completed their drawings, randomly divide the class into two groups. Have students in each group share their drawings and choose the best one. Then, have students move their desks into two rows side by side, with each desk touching the desks both in front and behind it. Have each student sit in one of the desks.  **4. Project a transparency of Student Information A, explain the activity, and assign students parts to draw.** When students are seated, tell them that they are now going to assume the roles of assembly line workers to manufacture high-quality paper dolls. Explain that each group will reproduce the drawing they have chosen as many times as possible in a 30-minute time period. To do so, each student will specialize in one part of the drawing. Tell students that the group that creates the most complete, high-quality drawings will receive bonus points. Have students number off. Make **Student Information A:** Assembly Line Organization into an overhead transparency, and project and review the transparency. Make sure all group members clearly understand which part of the man they have to draw. Have the members of each group pass around the picture they will reproduce so students know exactly what they are going to draw. If the part they are supposed to draw is not on the picture, have students add it as the picture is passed around. Then post the pictures on the wall at the end of each line. Tell students that during production there will be no talking, laughing, or horseplay.  (**Option:** You may want to set up the classroom to more closely replicate assembly line conditions. To do so, after students have set up the desks in rows, have them go outside the classroom. Then, do one or all of the following: alter the temperature in the room by turning up the heat or turning on space heaters; turn off all of the lights and use an extension cord to hang a single lightbulb or lamp from the ceiling; play a loud recording of factory noise; put on a construction hat labeled "boss" to simulate your role as the manager of the assembly line. Then have students reenter the room and sit in the desks.)  **5. Assume the role of factory manager, pass out paper, and tell students to begin production.** Once students understand the directions, tell them that you are the factory manager and quality control supervisor. Give each Worker One 150 to 200 sheets of blank paper, and have students begin working. As students work, push them to speed up, to concentrate, and to work harder by saying things like, "Keep production moving! Don’t slow down! Our competitors will catch up to us!" Check completed drawings to make sure they are of high quality, and throw out any pictures that don’t measure up. Carefully monitor students’ work and punish those who misbehave by destroying finished products and reprimanding them: "No talking! Keep your attention on your work. Don’t waste time laughing." Expect some students to be frustrated by the pace and repetitiveness of the work. Some may even refuse to work or try to organize the other workers to "strike." You may want to "fire" unproductive workers and malcontents. Alternatively, you may want to "pay" students for their work on the assembly line by telling students that their grade for the activity is based on their productivity.  **6. Have students stop working and count the finished products.** After 30 minutes, have students stop working. Have a student from each group count the number of finished products, and award points (optional) to the winning group. Then have students clean up the classroom and return the desks to their ordinary configuration. |
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| **7. Hold a class discussion to help students process their feelings. Center the discussion on these questions: • How did you feel working as a craftsperson at the beginning of this activity? • How did you feel working on the assembly line? • What factors made producing the drawing on the assembly line difficult or frustrating? • How did members of your group cope with the stress or monotony? • What made you want to work hard? What made you not want to work hard? • How did you feel about the teacher as the factory manager? • How did your attitude or feelings change as the activity progressed? • Did you prefer working as an individual craftsperson or working on the assembly line? Explain.  8. Help students connect the experience to history. After students have shared their feelings about the activity, tell them that this activity was designed to help them understand how the specialization of labor and the move to assembly line production impacted workers around the turn of the century. Use the details from the notes below to create a T-chart to help students understand how their experience connects to history.  In-Class Experience • students created their best complete drawings • students created one part of the drawing • most students did not see the finished drawings • students’ work was monotonous • students’ bodies and hands hurt from drawing the same part over and over • students listened to a recording of loud noise and worked under a single light near space heaters • students did not have a choice about what part they were to draw • students’ work was boring • students were resentful of the teacher’s reprimands  Assembly Line Work • craftspersons worked on a product from start to finish • assembly line workers completed only one part of a product • assembly line workers often had no connection to the finished products • assembly line work was monotonous • assembly line workers experienced physical strain and injuries from repetitive work • poor factory conditions included loud noise, poor lighting, and high temperatures • assembly line workers had little control over the work they performed • assembly line workers completed machine-like tasks that required no creativity and little thought • assembly line workers became alienated from their managers  9. Have students process this lesson in their** [**Interactive Student Notebooks**](http://info.teachtci.com/forum/isn.aspx)**. On the left side of their notebooks, have students create a two-panel cartoon comparing the experience of assembly line workers with their own experience. In one panel have them draw assembly line workers with thought bubbles containing the workers’ feelings about their work. In the second panel have them draw an analogous situation in their own life, such as putting tacos or hamburgers together in a fast food restaurant or collating and stapling papers for a parent. Below their cartoons, have students write a paragraph in which they explain the similarities and differences between the two situations.  10. Have students read Student Handout B. After students understand the connections between their experience and that of assembly line workers, give each student a copy of Student Handout B: The Assembly Line. Have students carefully read the handout.  11. Hold a discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of the assembly line. After students have read Student Handout B, draw a matrix on an overhead transparency with the headers "Advantages of the Assembly Line" and "Disadvantages of the Assembly Line" and these groups along the left side: "Factory Owners", "Factory Workers", and "Consumers". Have students copy the matrix into their notebooks. Hold a class discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of the assembly line for each of the groups. During the discussion, have students record notes in the appropriate spaces of the matrix.** |